

I interpret part time for Sorenson Video Relay and work fulltime for an agency that often requests interpreters. I have worked in the field since 1974. Before the advent of video relay, there was already a local shortage of sign language interpreters. Since the popularity of VRS is booming and Sorenson continues to expand its interpreting staff locally to meet increasing needs, there is now a greater shortage of community interpreters than ever before. The escalating demand for VRS services without an equally growing pool of interpreters has substantially impacted the availability of community freelance interpreters; this already limited interpreter pool is also not able to keep up with the demand for VRS services, which means VRS calls cannot ALWAYS be answered as quickly as the FCC and we would currently like. The interpreting field needs time to recruit and train more people to work as VRS interpreters. This would require long-term planning. Unfortunately, this is HIGHLY skilled work and many people who have had interpreter training or currently work as interpreters in other settings do not have adequate skills or even a desire to work in a VRS setting. Statistics of the numbers of nationally certified interpreters are misleading because, for a variety of reasons, a huge number of those interpreters are not in the current pool of working interpreters. If statistics told the entire story, we would never have had an interpreter shortage to begin with. It is well-known and widely reported in our field that interpreters nationwide are experiencing these same growing pains.